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SUBJECT: DART VISIT TO AN NAJAF

SUMMARY

1. DART Field Team West traveled to An Najaf on 24 May to participate in special Marine and Army civil affairs briefings for ORHA in which a 5 June mayoral election was announced, possibly the first mayoral election in the country. WFP and MOT told the DART that they were ready to begin governorate-wide distributions by 1 June. MOT offices remained intact during and after the war because MOT personnel provided protection for their offices' own assets. Doctors at the women's and children's hospital told the DART that bad water, malnutrition, and poor sanitation in An Najaf led to diarrhea in nearly every child patient they treated. The IRC discussed with the DART a draft proposal to address emergency water and sanitation issues in both An Najaf and Karbala. End Summary.

WFP, MOT PREPARED FOR JUNE DISTRIBUTION IN AN NAJAF

2. U.N. World Food Program (WFP) staff in An Najaf said there were no major problems with the public distribution system (PDS) in An Najaf Governorate and that the MOT would be ready to begin distributions on 1 June. According to WFP, the An Najaf Ministry of Trade (MOT) offices were not looted or damaged because MOT staff protected its assets, including the PDS database. It is intact and will be utilized during June's distribution. MOT continues to provide its own security, and WFP said security at the facilities was not a concern. Flour agents are conducting some flour distributions as a means to clear older stocks. This distribution is also intended to avoid beneficiary discontent. Apparently, current flour stocks are of a lower quality flour than the new flour supplies due in from WFP. Problems will arise if some beneficiaries receive the lesser quality flour at the same time their neighbors receive the new higher quality flour. WFP said all beneficiaries would receive the new flour during June distributions.

3. WFP reports a shortage in several ration commodities in An Najaf stocks, particularly pulses. Stock inventories indicate that An Najaf has no pulses, weaning cereal or adult milk. WFP will attempt to locate and supply An Najaf with the short commodities and is preparing public service announcements detailing the June ration. (Note: Sufficient quantities of dried whole milk for the adult ration are missing from the nationwide pipeline. End Note.)

4. WFP is aware that An Najaf has five government-supported hospitals, and institutions that feed orphans, the elderly, and the disabled. WFP plans to work with MOT to ensure that patients in these institutions will be included in future distributions. WFP has also discussed re-registration issues with the MOT and said that the registration center will be prepared to immediately adjust and correct any registration errors and define procedures for those who have lost their ration cards. WFP has an eight-person staff in An Najaf and plans to hire two additional employees. The estimated distribution period for June will last 15 days.

OTHER ISSUES

5. WFP staff had no information on what, if any, role it would play in the planned purchase of local wheat grain.

16. No LPG supplies have arrived in An Najaf since March. The Marines report that four tankers of LPG were inbound on 24 May but said this will not fully address the LPG shortage.

17. An Najaf has received recent supplies of wheat and rice and MOT has begun milling wheat at five fully functional mills. Electricity coverage is at approximately 40 percent, but all mills have generators and fuel.

AN NAJAF PROTECTION ISSUES

18. During the Civil Affairs orientation meeting, Coalition forces explained that An Najaf will be the first city in the country to hold general mayoral elections. Voters need to be over 18 years of age, have An Najaf residency for over six months, and have no criminal record. Candidates must be over 40 years old with An Najaf residency for over six months and a clean criminal record. The election date is set for 5 June, and it has become somewhat controversial because several political parties with different religious affiliations will be running, notwithstanding that the interim mayor is Sunni in a primarily Shia community. Coalition forces will be monitoring the elections to ensure they are conducted safely and freely; however, issues of intimidation and retribution may become a factor prior to, during, and after these elections.

19. On the legal side, judges, including the chief judge, were appointed (12 judges were removed because of Ba'ath party affiliation), and the justice system is beginning to take shape. An Najaf is in need of a courthouse since the previous one was destroyed in the fighting. The prison is co-located at the training academy and major repairs to the building are apparently needed.

110. Security continues to be an issue in An Najaf. Six patrols per day are being conducted by Coalition forces and will eventually be handed over to the military police (MP). A police academy has begun training police recruits. As of 24 May, 680 police have been trained by 74 MPs. The first phase of the training is a two-day focus on community policing. They are planning on conducting phase two, which consists of a five-day program focusing on specialized skills.

111. Another Coalition source mentioned that there were five known mass graves in the area and that there might be many others. The local community looking for loved ones have disinterred many, if not all of these five sites. The Coalition source estimates that approximately 400,000 people were killed in that area alone and that people were still disappearing until the war began in March. Although there have not been any specific retribution issues thus far, the Coalition source did say that a list has been circulating with 75 names that says, "Your day is coming; retribution is at hand." He is attempting to locate a copy of this list. The DART shared a copy of the Office of Transition Initiative's two-page abuse prevention handout with the Coalition forces. There appears to be no human rights organizations in An Najaf.

VISIT TO AN NAJAF'S HOSPITAL FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN

112. Doctors at the An Najaf Hospital for Women and Children told the DART that 85 to 90 percent of new child patients suffer from diarrhea, and they suspect that some may suffer from cholera. The 200-bed hospital also receives two to three malnutrition patients everyday. The doctors with whom the DART spoke did not know if the diarrhea and malnutrition rates were higher than normal for this time of year. The immunizations program, which had slowed prior to the war, has now ceased. The infant mortality rate increased during the war due to increased pressure on the staff and insecurity, although staff continued to work. The hospital staff and nearby residents combined to ward off would-be looters.

113. The hospital has running water most days of the week, and the electrical power is "on and off." A doctor said it takes ten minutes from the time the electricity goes down to the time the generator-powered electricity goes on-dangerously affecting the low-weight babies in the incubators. Sometimes, two babies are placed in one incubator because of demand and broken down equipment. Sanitary and sewage conditions, described by one doctor as "so bad," are in poor condition. A receiving room was teeming with flies. There is one functioning telephone line for the entire hospital, and the air-conditioning unit is failing. The doctors said the hospital requires about ten oxygen cylinders each day. It now rations two. One staff member said two to three children die each day for lack of

oxygen. Some residents are staying away from the hospital because they realize there are drug and equipment shortages; others because of service charges. The doctors admitted that many of the hospital's problems existed for years.

14. There are shortages of many drugs and supplies, including IV fluids and antibiotics. "The most important drugs are finished," said a female doctor. If she could change one thing in the hospital, she said she would abolish the hospital's self-financing system that is burdensome on poor patients. Of the hospital's 38 specialized doctors, 23 are female. The new hospital director was elected over three other candidates late last month. Hospital staff received their USD 20 emergency payments, but not their regular April or May salaries yet.

15. Last week, doctors said a Red Crescent Society (of unknown origin) delivered a small quantity of drugs, and CARE recently delivered lactose-free milk and high-protein biscuits. The doctors said no other agency had visited after the war, though Coalition representatives had come several times. It was unknown whether drugs were available in the governorate's drug warehouse. An Najaf governorate has a total of five hospitals, three of them in An Najaf city, and 14 primary health centers.

SPECIAL CIVIL AFFAIRS BRIEFING IN AN NAJAF

16. The DART attended special Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA) briefings on 24 May in An Najaf by both the Marines and Army civilian affairs teams. The city's hospitals were referred to as "atrocious." The Coalition forces have yet to provide assistance to hospitals, and non-governmental organizations and others have contributed only small quantities of drugs. The sewer system is old and needs to be rehabilitated. At full capacity, it would only service 20 percent of the city. They said the incoming water is chlorinated, although its filters needed to be replaced and some pumps and motors overhauled.

17. Coalition forces said diesel fuel was needed for An Najaf's power plant. One turbine is currently running; two are not. He said that if all three were running, they would provide only 40 percent of the city's electrical needs. Fifteen trucks delivered gas yesterday, and four LPG trucks were expected today.

18. Neither teachers, nor hospital employees, have been paid April salaries yet, though they had received their USD 20 emergency payment. Coalition forces said some teachers were leaving their schools to earn money elsewhere. The textile industry, once a large employer in An Najaf, is suffering because a large textile factory was destroyed in the war. Coalition forces also said another large industry, date production, might be harmed because it was too late to aerial spray the date trees.

JONES